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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 000023
SIPDIS

NEA/ARP, NEA/RA, NEA/IPA
E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/12/2019

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SUBJECT: MFA'S ARAB WORLD DEPARTMENT DISCUSSES ABU MAZEN'S
RECENT VISIT, CONCERNS ABOUT YEMEN, IRAN

Classified By: Political Counselor Pete O'Donohue for reasons 1.4 b and
d

11. (U) There is an action request in para 7.

12. (C) Summary: The head of MFA's Arab World Department, Ambassador Jassem Mubarak, told Polcouns January 12 that Palestine Authority President Mahmoud Abbas's January 5 - 6 visit to Kuwait and meeting with the Amir was positive, and provided an opportunity for Kuwait to encourage Abbas to remain in politics and focus on Palestinian reconciliation as an essential step towards a peace agreement with Israel. Mubarak confirmed that the MFA would deliver a similar message on Palestinian reconciliation to HAMAS leader Khaled Mishaal later January 12 when he visits Kuwait. FM Dr. Mohammed separately confirmed to Ambassador that the GOK would provide \$50 million for the PA via the World Bank Trust Fund once discussions with the Parliament over a contentious personal debt forgiveness bill are concluded. Mubarak also noted Kuwait's growing concern over increasing instability in Yemen, strong interest in and intent to participate in the January 28 London conference, and raised Kuwaiti concern about recent comments by CENTCOM Commander General Petraeus suggesting the possibility of a military option in dealing with Iran. End Summary. GOK Urges Palestinian Reconciliation

13. (C) Ambassador Jassem Al-Mubarak, Director of MFA's Arab World Department, in a January 12 conversation with Polcouns, said the highlight of Palestine Authority President Mahmoud Abbas's January 5 - 6 visit to Kuwait was an open and direct chat with Kuwaiti Amir Shaykh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al Sabah. Mubarak -- who had been out of Kuwait during Abbas's visit, but was subsequently briefed on it -- noted that the Amir had urged President Abbas to abandon any thought of stepping down from Palestinian politics and to continue to lead efforts to bring about Palestinian reconciliation, consistent with existing Egyptian efforts to promote peace and reconciliation. Reconciliation between the Palestinian factions, the Amir suggested, was a necessary first step towards a meaningful peace process; Israel needed an interlocutor who had the authority to make commitments and would not negotiate with a divided Palestinian entity. Mubarak said that Abbas hinted that he might stay on if he sees "a glimmer of hope" in the MEPP, but would otherwise be inclined to step down. Mubarak noted that the GOK views Abbas as a "moderate who we can trust and rely on" and strongly desires his continued role as Palestinian leader. Mubarak said Abbas agreed that a continued focus on the peace process -- with Palestinian reconciliation as a first step -- was the only viable option. The two other options, "war with Israel" or indefinite lingering in a "no war/no peace" status were non-starters. Mubarak added that the GOK was inspired by President Obama's "seriousness" about ending this long-standing regional problem and is eager to meet him half way; essential steps toward this end will include, in addition to Palestinian reconciliation, a more forthcoming Israeli position on settlements and the status of Jerusalem, consistent with existing features of the MEPP roadmap.

14. (C) Responding to Polcouns inquiries about a reported imminent visit by Hamas leader Khaled Mishaal, Mubarak said that Mishaal had, indeed, already arrived in Kuwait and would be dining with Mubarak and other MFA officials later on January 12. Mubarak noted that the GOK's message to Mishaal would be similar to the Amir's message to Abbas -- that Palestinian reconciliation within the framework of the Egyptian-led peace effort "and under Egyptian supervision" was an essential first step towards a peace process that Israel could take seriously. Mubarak said that Egypt's Ambassador to Kuwait called on him on January 11 and asked MFA to stress to Mishaal GOK support for an Egyptian decision to install steel barriers on its territory to inhibit smuggling between Gaza and Egypt. "Egypt views this a national security issue; but it is not helping Israel to lay siege to Gaza." Mubarak said the GOK fully supports Egypt's position and will convey this to Mishaal. (Comment: Mubarak's positive slant on Abu Mazen may reflect his personal views more than that of the GOK as a whole. Earlier, MFA U/S Khalid Jarallah told Ambassador that the GOK's support for Abu Mazen was based on his personal KUWAIT 0000023 002 OF 002

integrity, rather than blanket support or a preference for PA rather than HAMAS leadership, which they believe must be brought in for any successful and sustainable solution. Although Mubarakhi did not appear aware of the commitment, FM Dr. Mohammed had earlier confirmed to the Ambassador that the GoK has agreed to provide \$50 million for the PA via the World Bank Trust Fund after current wrangling with the parliament over a personal debts forgiveness bill is concluded. End Comment.)
Growing Concern Over Instability in Yemen

15. (C) Turning to the subject of Yemen, Mubarakhi noted that the GOK is deeply concerned by growing instability there and, like the USG, views the specter of Yemen becoming even more of an Al-Qaeda base as "a terrible scenario, if true." He added that Kuwait is also paying close attention to the central government's war on the Houthis (and wondering what Iran's role is in this) and to the prospect that corruption and weakness in the Sanaa government could lead to a worsening situation in southern Yemen, possibly to include a movement in that part of the country to break away from the rest of Yemen. Mubarakhi acknowledged that the GOK is particularly concerned that instability in Yemen is a serious threat to Saudi Arabia, a GCC partner and a pillar of overall Gulf stability. Mubarakhi noted that the GOK has been invited to attend a January 28 UK-hosted summit in London on the situation in Yemen and is interested in attending; the GOK would like to know at what level the USG will be represented at this meeting, so it can determine an appropriate delegation. While being clear that the GOK is still studying the situation in Yemen, he noted that Kuwait believes it is important for well-wishers to take care in how and to whom they dispense assistance. He suggested that while the central government in Sanaa is corrupt, direct assistance to tribals could provide Iran with an excuse to intervene directly among the Houthis; such issues needed to be considered carefully.
Tread Carefully on Iran

16. (C) Further on the theme of Iran, Mubarakhi expressed concern over public remarks CENTCOM commander General Petraeus reportedly used January 10 referring to the possible use of force to contain Iran's nuclear ambitions. (Note: Mubarakhi was apparently referring to a Petraeus interview on CNN's "Amanpour" show in which he acknowledged that the US had developed contingency plans for dealing with Iran's nuclear facilities. End Note.) Mubarakhi told POLCouns that the GOK is concerned by any possible use of force in dealing with Iran and believes the international community needs to deal carefully with an Ahmadinejad regime that is under a great deal of stress because of internal dissension. Mubarakhi suggested that the Iranian regime could seize on outside threats, even vague or indirect ones, as a way to rally support for itself; the international community will do better to wait and watch while internal events in Iran play themselves out.

17. (U) Embassy requests Department to provide, as appropriate, information on planned level of USG attendance at the London conference on Yemen, so these can be shared with the GOK.

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